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SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES ROUNDUP, AUGUST 25-SEPTEMBER 11

REF: A. BAKU 674

[1](#)B. BAKU 724

Classified By: Political-Economic Counselor Robert Garverick, Reasons 1
.4 b and d.

[1](#)1. (U) This cable is part of a regular series that will summarize major ongoing human rights issues in Azerbaijan. This series aims to pull together many different sources of information into one readable biweekly summary of human rights cases, with the aim of giving a fuller picture of Azerbaijan's complex political environment. Developments in the case of jailed bloggers Emin Milli and Adnan Hajizade are addressed in Reftel B.

Court Dismisses Lawsuit of Election Monitoring Center

[1](#)2. (U) In September 2 the Yasamal District Court dismissed a lawsuit filed by the Election Monitoring and Democracy Studies Center (EMDS, formerly EMC) against the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). EMDS had decided to sue the MoJ after the Ministry refused to register EMDS as an NGO (again), without providing a substantial reason. EMDS claimed the refusal was a violation of freedom of association and demanded 10,000 AZN (12,195 USD) as compensation. During the first court hearing, held on August 31, an MoJ representative stated that the reason for refusing registration was a grammar mistake where the wrong suffix was used, making a word which should have been singular plural. EMDS's lawyer argued that this was not a valid reason for refusal, but the judge did not agree. A representative of EMDS confirmed that the organization will file an appeal (NOTE: the documentation an NGO needs to submit for registration is voluminous. For minor technical revisions, the MoJ can ask an NGO to submit corrections, rather than reject the entire application. END NOTE.)

Protest Over Mosque Closing

[1](#)3. (C) On September 1 a group of people gathered in front of the Baku City Executive Committee (ExCom) to protest the decision of the decision of the Baku City Court on Economic Issues ruling to destroy the Fatimeyi-Zahra Mosque. Opposition press report that around 100 people held placards and shouted "blood will be shed if the mosque is destroyed" and "the prison will be full of prisoners if the mosque is destroyed." The media also reported the police violently dispersed the protesters, but no pictures were available to confirm this. There were no reports of people detained after the protest. The number of people involved in the protests,

however, is large for Baku's recent history, and shows the importance of this issue to the community.

Property Rights Violations in Sinjan Village

14. (C) The construction of a new water pipeline from Oghuz to Baku is causing uproars in communities along its planned route, as local governments expropriate land, reportedly without prior compensation or in some cases even notification. BBC's Azerbaijani Service reported that residents in Sinjan Village in Oghuz District are angry that their hazelnut orchards were destroyed without any compensation from the GOAJ. These residents had earlier prevented work from starting in the area before compensation arrived, but police forced heavy machinery onto the land and razed the trees. Embassy officials confirmed this information with Zohrab Ismayilov, head of the Public Association for Assistance to a Free Economy. Ismayilov confirmed that similar incidents are happening in other areas where highways are being widened, and property owners are often not given any documentation when their lands are taken, and compensation amounts are very low.

More Arrests in Nakhchivan

15. (C) Ilgar Nasibov of Radio Liberty in Nakhchivan reported that four religious men who prayed often at the Turkish Mosque in Nakhchivan were detained by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Nasibov said that people are afraid to

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talk about the issue, and he could get no official information about the reason for detention from the MIA. But according to friends of Nasibov's who work in a large bazaar right next to the mosque, the four men were quite religious, but the reason for the arrest is probably not related to Islam. People say that this Turkish mosque, run by a Turkish imam who also would not comment on the arrests, was becoming a place where people could discuss their dissatisfaction with the social and political situation in Nakhchivan. Nasibov claims that about 70% of the 50-60 people who pray regularly there are former members of opposition parties, and therefore politically inclined. Nasibov hopes to learn more from the men themselves once they are released, which should be September 6.

Court Reinstates Student Reporter

16. (C) On September 10 the Lankaran City Court ruled that Parviz Azimov, a student at Lankaran State University and a reporter for a local paper, should be re-instated in University. Azimov had been expelled from the University in February after he was in a scuffle with another student. Azimov has shown, however, that this incident was set up by the University administration after he wrote a newspaper article exposing corruption at the University. The case attracted a lot of local attention, and the positive outcome of the case is a rare bit of good news from Azerbaijan.

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